

Jonathan Edwards' Book

THE
DANGER
OF

SCHISMS and CONTENTIONS

With Respect to the Ministry and Ordina-
nances of the Gospel, represented
IN A

SERMON

Preached at the Meeting of the Presbytery
at Woodbridge, October 10th, 1739: And
published at the Desire of some of the Mi-
nisters present.

BY JONATHAN DICKINSON, M. A.
Minister of the Gospel, at Elizabeth-
Town in New-Jersey.

2 Cor. iv. 5. For we Preach not our selves but CHRIST
JESUS the Lord: And our selves your Servants fo
CHRIST JESUS sake.

1 Cor. iv. 5. Therefore Judge nothing before the
Time, until the Lord come who will both bring to Light the
hidden Things of Darknes; and will make Manifest the
Councils of the Heart.

New-York, printed by J. Peter Zenger, 1739.





T H E
D A N G E R
O F

SCHISMS and CONTENTIONS,

With Respect to the Ministry and Ordinances of the Gospel, &c.

I Cor. iii. 4. *For while one saith I am of Paul, and another I am of Apollos, are ye not carnal ?*



THE Gospel of Reconciliation is the greatest Priviledge that was ever enjoy'd by the Children of Men, and ought to be received with admiring and adoring Views of God's infinite Goodness in this *unspeakable Gift*. By this we are distinguished from the greatest

A Part

Part of the World, who sit in *Darkness* and see no *Light*. while the *Day* spring from on *High* hath visited us, and *Life* and *Immortality* are brought to *Light*, among us: By this we are instructed in our Duty and Interest, and guided in all the Ways of Righteousness, Peace and Comfort. By this we are put under the best Advantages to be Favourites of Heaven, and to be the *Children of God*, to be happy in this World, and to be happy for ever. — How sad a Consideration therefore is it, that this glorious Privilege should be the unhappy Occasion of Factions and Schisms, Strife and Debate, among those who are thereby so peculiarly dignified and distinguished! But thus it has always been; and thus by melancholly Experience we yet find the Case. Our Jarrs and Animosities are occasioned, and our Divisions and Confusions justified by that blessed Institution that breaths nothing but *Love, Peace, Long-suffering, Gentleness and Goodness*. — This Conduct in the Beginning of Christianity, was the Cause of that heavy Complaint of the Apostle in the *third Verse* of our Context. *For are you not carnal? For whereas there is among you Envy and Strife, and Divisions; are ye not carnal and walk as Men?* The Justice of this Complaint is exemplified in the Words of the Text. *For while one saith I am*

of

of Paul, another I am of Apollos, are ye not carnal? — In the Words are,

I. An implicit Accusation of these *Corinthians*. *One saith I am of Paul, another I am of Apollos. i. e.* They were divided into two contending Parties, pretending to have these great and eminent Ministers of Christ their respective Heads or Leaders; the one Side being denominated from the one, the other Side from the other; and each Party in such a distinguishing Manner preferring the one, as (comparatively at least) to despise the other of these excellent Servants of Christ. — It seems indeed from the iv *Chap.* and 6 *verse* of this Epistle, That *Paul* and *Apollos* were not personally the Objects of their Factions, Preference or Contempt; but there were other Ministers of Christ, of less Eminence in the Church, about whom they maintained such Fews and Debates, who are here in a *Figure* represented by *Paul* and *Apollos*. But whoever were the pretended Heads of these different Parties, they were divided into Factions, the Peace of the Church was sacrificed to these Debates, and Schism and Confusion were the sad Effects of their thus preferring one Minister of Christ to another.

II. We have in the Words, a necessary Consequence of their Conduct set before 'em; *Are you*

you not carnal? Does not this your Behaviour plainly and evidently shew, That if you are not under the Power, you are at least under the Prevalence of a carnal and un sanctified Spirit?

The Sum of the Words are contained in this Doctrine.

That a factious setting up and preferring one faithful Minister of the Gospel above another, is an Argument of a carnal Mind.

For Illustration hereof I shall endeavour to consider.

1. Who may be said factiously to set up and prefer one Minister of the Gospel above another.

2. How this appears to be an Argument of of a carnal Mind.

And conclude with some Reflections by Way of Improvement.

I am then in the first Place to consider, who may be said factiously to set up and prefer one faithful Minister of the Gospel above another.

That I may set this in a just View, and obviate such Prejudices as may be entertained against this Doctrine, I would first premise, That a bare Preference of one Minister to another, on account of his superiour Gifts, Graces, or ministerial Qualifications, was not the Fault these *Corinthians* were charged with in

our

our Text; nor is this to be considered as an Argument of Carnality. We must shut our Eyes, and act in Defiance to the clearest Dictates of our Reason and Observation, if we don't allow, that God has endowed some of his Servants with much brighter Capacities, and more eminent Degrees of Learning, Knowledge, Grace, and other needful Furniture for this sacred Trust, than some others are favoured with; and there is just Cause that we should esteem and value them accordingly. *Paul* for Instance, was doubtless in all these Respects preferable to *Apollos* and other his Contemporaries in the Work of the Ministry. It was but Justice to give him the Honour of being in *Nothing behind the very chiefest Apostles*. Though in this Case we are very apt to exceed in setting too high a Value upon Men's Persons; yet there is no Danger of over valuing the Grace of God, that is discovered in their Abilities for, or Improvement in this important Work. This being premised, I proceed to shew,

I. That they are chargeable with this factious Spirit, who prefer one, and despise and depreciate another faithful Minister of Christ.
 — *The Feet of them that preach the Gospel of Peace and bring glad Tidings of good Things, are beautiful. They are worthy to be esteemed*

ed, *that watch for our Souls* ; and to be honoured for their Work's sake, who are *Ambassadors of Christ* ; and are in *his Name and Stead* entreating and beseeching us to be reconciled to God. And tho' there are *Diversities of Gifts by the same Spirit, and Diversities of Administrations by the same Lord*, given to the several Ministers of the Gospel, they are all to *profit withal* ; and all (in a Person qualified for the great Work) made subservient to the Interest of Christ's Kingdom in the World. How great is the Injustice therefore, how criminal the Injury and Indignity done to those Ministers of Christ, who are the Objects of Contempt and Abuse, for want of some particular Qualifications, that some of their Hearers are pleased to admire in others. I am grieved to see so many Instances of Sights and Neglects on this Account, from some of our People towards their faithful and painful Ministers in these Parts of the Country. And what adds to the Grievance is, That there is nothing more common in this Case, than to admire and applaud those Qualifications in others, that are manifest Imperfections. And thus the Servants of Christ must be laded with Contempt, for avoiding the Mistakes of their fallible Brethren. But suppose it were otherwise ; suppose there be indeed some peculiar

Excellency

Excellency in one Minister of Christ that another wants, must his Esteem and Reputation be therefore raised upon the Ruin and Destruction of the others? Must one Minister be vilified and contemned, because God hath given superiour Gifts and Graces to another? Must *Paul* be despised on Account of *Apollos's* Eloquence of Speech? Or *Apollos* be contemptuously treated because *Paul* exceeded him in all the extraordinary Gifts of the Spirit? Must the ten Apostles be treated with Disrespect and Neglect, because *James* and *John* were *Boanerges*; or these two be despised, because they had not the same calm and easy Methods of Address with the other Ten? This were to maintain perpetual Debates and Emulations, to root out vital Piety, and to make the Followers of the Prince of Peace to be literally an *Army with Banners*. This is what the Apostle largely argues against, throughout the xii. Chapter of the *first Epistle* to the *Corinthians*, which he concludes with this Challenge, *Are all Apostles? Are all Prophets? Are all Teachers? Are all Workers of Miracles? Have all the Gifts of healing? Do all speak with Tongues? Do all Interpret?* In Allusion to which I may say: Are all Men of equal Sprightliness and Sagacity? Are all equally eloquent? Have all

the same charming Voice or winning Methods of Addrels ? Are all Sons of Thunder ? No ! *God has set the Members every one of them in the Body as it hath pleased him.* And we are accordingly to esteem and value all that are carefully discharging the awful Trust committed to them of the Lord, *as Ministers of Christ ; and Stewards of the Mysteries of the Kingdom.* And not add to their heavy Weight ; and weaken their Hands in their difficult Work, by Sights and Contempts, Abuses and Indignities.

If it should in this Case be pretended, that we may have especial Reason to Esteem one Man's Ministry ; and to despise others in Comparison of him, on Account of the peculiar spiritual Advantages received under his Ministrations. Perhaps others will make the same Pretence and Plea, in direct Opposition to ours : And thus every Minister must be both admired and despised in his Turn, according to the real or imaginary Success of his Ministry. But this Mistake lies in giving the Honour to the Instrument, which belongs only to the principal Agent ; and not ascribing to the Sovereignty of Gods free Grace, all the Blessings that he is pleased to afford to the means of his Grace. We should in this Case consider the Apostles Admonition, in the

the 5. 6; and 7 Verses of our Context. *Who then is Paul or who is Apollos, but Ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every Man? I have planted, Apollos watered: But God gave the increase. So then, neither is he that planteth any Thing, neither is he that watereth: But God that giveth the Increase.* By which we are instructed to attend upon the Ministry God hath set over us, with a Dependence not upon the Means; but the God of Means, for the saving Efficacy of it. If our Minister have not such superiour Capacities or desirable Qualifications, as we see or imagine in some others: Yet since the Providence of God hath settled us under his Ministrations, we are in the Way of God and Duty, while we are seriously, humbly, and dilligently attending upon them. And we may depend upon this, that if ever God bestow saving Grace upon us, it will be in his own Way.

2. They are also chargeable in this Respect who endeavour to make Parties and Divisions in the Church, on Account of such Preference of one Minister of Christ to another. When once Men come under the Power of such a factious Spirit, *to have Mens Persons in Administration because of Advantage*, they will commonly Use their best endeavours to add

add to their Party, that they may justify that Conduct by their Numbers, which must be condemn'd both by Religion and Reason. These will never want Pretences to palliate their dividing Practices; and to seduce others to an Imitation of their Irregularities. This is to promote the best Welfare of their Neighbours. This is to bring them under the Advantage of a more Powerful Ministry, whereby their eternal Interest may be best promoted. 'Tis to associate them with more serious Christians; and to bring them acquainted with more vital Piety. These and such like Panegyricks upon themselves and their Party, are too commonly heard from some among us, who seem to suppose they are in the Service of Christ, when breaking in upon the Peace of the Churches, and actively endeavouring to foment Discords, Divisions and Confusions among them. But let it be consider'd, that Nothing can be more contrary to the Spirit and Tenour of the Gospel, than divisive Principles and Practices. Whatever Good may be pretended to; its a clear Case, that Church Divisions are certainly Sinful and displeasing to God. That Rule must therefore take Place here; *That we don't do Evil, that good may come of it.* Let but any serious Person consider the strong Declaratons so frequently

found

found in the Word of God against Factions and Divisions, it must make him awfully careful to avoid, what is so contrary and displeasing to the infinite Fountain of Peace and Love. I would therefore earnestly invite such Church Dividers as I have now described, to read and contemplate such Texts: s these. Cor. i. 10, 12, 13. *Now I beseech you Bretheren in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same Thing; and that there be no Divisions among you: But that ye be perfectly join'd together in the same Mind, and in the same Judgment.* — Now this I say, that every one of you saith I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. *Is Christ divided? Was Paul Crucified for you? Or were ye Baptized in the Name of Paul?* Rom. xvi. 17, 18. *Now I beseech you Brethren, mark them which cause Divisions and Offences, contrary to the Doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them: For they that are such, serve not the Lord Jesus Christ; but their own Belly; and by good Words and fair Speeches, deceive the Hearts of the Simple.* Jam. iii. 15, 16. *But if you have bitter Envyng and Strife in your Hearts, glory not, and ly not against the Truth. This Wisdom descendeth not from above; but is earthly, sensual, devillish. For where Envyng and Strife is,*
there

there is Confusion and every evil Work. 1 Cor. xiv. 33. God is not the Author of Confusion : But of Peace, in all the Churches of the Saints.

It it be pretended, That we are bound to seek our greater Edification ; and consequently to desert that Ministry under which we cannot find equal Advantage to our Souls. I answer, this Objection is founded upon a Mistake before obviated ; and the Objector forgets, that Paul *planteth*, and Apollos *watereth* ; but it is God that *giveth the Increase* ; that whoever are the Dispensers of the Means of Life, *the Excellency of the Power is of God, and not of Man*. I will be bold to say, if we do not find spiritual Edification under a faithful Minister of Christ, whether of the most eminent Capacities or not, it is our own Fault. And I can hardly be perswaded to believe, That God will bless us with extraordinary Edification for wandering out of his Way, and propagating Schisms abreast to so many solemn Admonitions to the contrary. — And I would desire the Objector further to consider the necessary Consequences of such Pretences. If one Minister may lawfully desert the Ministry and Society to which he belongs, for greater Edification, another may, and every one may desert them from the same Pretence : and thus the Society will be filled with utmost Confusion, if not

not brought to an utter Dissolution. And if this Practice be lawful in one Society, it is lawful in every Society. Every Congregation may by the same Plea, break through all the Obligations between their Minister and themselves, desperse from Parish to Parish, and from Town to Town, to seek their greater Edification, until there be no such Thing as an united Congregation left; nor any such Thing as a religious Society in the World. And how agreeable to the Mind of Christ are such Principles and Practices, as directly tend to the Dissolution of his Churches, may be even left to the most prejudiced Person among us.

But perhaps some will be ready to enquire, Whether there be no Cause to separate ourselves, and to encourage others to separate from the Ministry to which they sustain a special Relation; and to attend upon the Ministrations of another, more likely to serve our spiritual Interests? — To which I answer. When our Consciences are imposed upon by sinful Terms of Communion, or what we esteem to be such; when our Minister is openly vicious or immoral; or his Doctrines heterodox and subversive of the Fundamentals of Christianity, and of vital Piety; when the Ordinances of the Gospel are neglected, or corruptly administered; and the great Duties of the Ministry sloathful-
ly

ly omitted; or triflingly and carelessly performed; and when there can be no Redress of such Grievances from the Discipline Christ has appointed in his Church; I think a Man may then have a Call to peaceably withdraw from such a Ministry, and list himself under another. But as none of my Hearers can pretend this to be their Case. The Appeal may be made to their Consciences, and to the Consciences of others, that are in this Church dividing Scheme from the same or such like Pretences, whither their Ministers are not found in the Faith, regular in their Lives, and painfully diligent in the great Work committed to them of the Lord. What Foundation can there be therefore for breaking the Peace, or dividing the Communion of our religious Societies? It must certainly concern us all to hearken to that Admonition, *Eph. iv. 2, 3. With all Lowliness and Meekness, with Longsuffering forbearing one another in Love, to endeavour to keep the Unity of the Spirit, in the Bond of Peace.*

3. They are also chargeable in this Respect, who are censorious and uncharitable towards some of the faithful Ministers of Christ, and those that adhere to their sacred Administrations, on account of such Preference of one Minister to another. Men are loath to be esteemed in the Wrong, or to be disesteemed for their

their sinful Conduct; and therefore very ready to excuse one Fault by committing another. This is commonly seen; and in no Case more common, than in this before us. Divisions are Matter of publick Observation, and some Apology must be made for them: The want of justifiable Reasons must therefore be made up with Cenforiousness and uncharitable Aspersions. Whence those Pretences which are too often heard among us, That such Ministers whom any are pleased to disesteem, tho' of acknowledged Regularity in their Lives, and Diligence in their Work, are unsanctified Persons, destitute of spiritual Experiences; and therefore unfit to guide others in a Way wherein themselves are Strangers. They want right Views, are not influenced with a Zeal for the Cause of Christ, or with a Love to the Souls of Men. They and their Followers are *dead and lifeless*, of a *Laodicean* Indifferency; and therefore both to be forsaken. How common such like, and yet more severe Imputations, not fit to be mentioned, are among some Professors of Religion in these Parts, is too well known to need any particular Representation, But what is the Occasion of all these Invectives and uncharitable Surmises? If there be visible Matter of Complaint that can be justified before impartial Judges; if there

C

be

be any Scandal in their Lives, any censurable Fault or Neglect in their Ministry; why is not a Redress sought after? Why don't these dissatisfied Persons apply to the Discipline of the Church, to have those Causes of Complaint obviated and removed? But if the Case be the direct Reverse of these Suppositions; if the Objects of these Censures can safely appeal to their Hearers, in that Language, *1 Thes. ii. 10. Ye are Witnesses, and God also, how belily and justly, and unblameably we have behaved our selves among you.* If they have approved themselves sound in the Faith, laborious in their Callings, and (at least visibly) faithful to him that sent them; by what Plea or Pretext can such Censoriousness be justified? — These Ministers don't (perhaps) imitate some peculiarities of others, that some Men are pleased to esteem; nor applaud what they can't but suppose to be Mistake and Imperfection; and are therefore thus severely judged and censured.

But *who are these that judge another Man's Servant, who to his own Master must stand or fall?* Whence is this Spirit of Discerning? Whence are these Men Masters of the inward Sentiments. Principles or Views of others? By what Warrant do they invade his prerogative, who alone is the Searcher of the Hearts and

of

of the Reins? Is it a light Thing to depreciate the Ministry of a Servant of Christ and to do what we can to render it unsuccessful to the Souls of his Hearers? Do these Men take no Notice of all the Admonitions given them on that Account, in the Word of God? Have they no Regard to such Texts as that, in *Mat. vii. 1, 2. Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what Judgment ye judge ye shall be judged.* Or that in *Rom. xiv. 10, 13. But why dost thou judge thy Brother? Or why dost thou set at nought thy Brother? For we shall all stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ. Let us not therefore judge one another any more.* Whatever Views such Men may have of raising their own Reputation for Piety, by such uncharitable Reflections, they would do it more effectually in the Esteem of all serious and judicious Persons, by Humility and Lowliness of Mind, and by esteeming others better than themselves, according to the Apostolick Direction, *Phil. ii. 3.* But while they are saying, as *Isaj lxxv. 5. Stand by thy self, come not near me, for I am holier than thou.* They are a Smoke in God's Nostrils; and their Conduct cannot but be very unacceptable to him, who resisteth the Proud, and giveth Grace to the Humble.

I am aware what Answers may be made to all this. It will probably be urged, by such to whom this Discourse is more directly pointed, That those Ministers and their Adherents who are thus censured by them, have not experienced those Convictions and Humiliations as are necessary Preparations to a saving Conversion to God; nor such Evidences of the Love of God, or such *Joy and Peace in believing*, as those that are the true Children of God have experienced, — Besides, they find Fault with those that have had these Experiences, and are evidently sanctified Persons, which is a black Mark upon them, that they are *Strangers, who cannot intermeddle with these Joys*. These seem to be the chief Arguments used to justify the uncharitable Invectives that are so often heard, and so much complained of among us.

To the first of these I answer. How do these Men know what have been the religious Experiences of others; or what Intercourse there has been between God and their Souls? The most humble, and therefore the most serious Christians are the least ostentatious; and least likely to boast of their own Attainments; and he only that *pondereth the Heart*, is capable to determine what their State is, what Change has passed upon their Souls; or what Experiences

ences

ences they have had, or have not had, of a Work of Grace in their Hearts. To us belongs Charity and Hope, where an irregular Conversation don't give us Cause to the contrary. But suppose that these Objects of Censure have not experienced just the same Kind or Degree of Conviction or Humiliation, that some others have passed through, of whose good Estate there is the greatest Confidence. Is it therefore good Evidence of their Unregeneracy? Shall we *limit the holy one of Israel*? Or confine the Operations of divine Grace to any special or particular Methods? Don't continual Observation convince us, That the Spirit of God doth in a Variety of Ways, Means and Degrees awaken Sinners to a Sense of their Guilt and Danger; and bring them from a State of carnal Security to the Footstool of his Mercy.

To the second (and perhaps the chief) Plea for this uncharitableness, I would observe, That it is one Thing to find Fault with Men's Conduct, and another to censure their State. I hope those Ministers that are most loudly complained of as unregenerate, do not run into the same Mistake which they condemn in others; and judge all those to be Hypocrites, by whom they themselves are so severely judged. No! we would hope well of many of these

these our Brethren, tho' we cannot justify their Conduct.

We would charitably conclude some of them to be sincere Christians, tho' we find Fault with their factious divisive and censorious Principles and Practices, which we cannot but Esteem at the best *as a dead Fly in the Apothecaries Ointment*. And must we *call Darkness Light; and Light Darkness*. Must we soothe and flatter Men in their manifest Faults; and join with them in the Subversion of the Peace and Prosperity of our Churches; or be thus abusively treated? To the righteous Judge do we submit our Cause, to him *who knows our Work, and our Labour, and Patience*, from whom we hope for Acceptance in our sincere Desires and Endeavours to serve him; and have therefore no Reason to fear the severest Censures of our most uncharitable Brethren.

4 They are also chargeable with a factious setting up and preferring one Minister of the Gospel above another, who limit the Success of Gospel Ordinances to particular Dispensers of them. As there is a great variety of Gifts among the the several Dispensers of the Gospel of Christ, so is there a like variety of Taste and Sentiment among their Hearers, differently esteeming and applauding the several Preachers,

chers, according as their Ministry is suited to their Disposition, Genius, or Circumstance: And how apt are Men to run into Extreame in this Case: How ready to conclude, that because they have, or suppose they have experienced peculiar Advantage, by a Particular Ministry, that therefore no spiritual Benefit is to be hoped for from any such, who don't use the same Methods of Address. From such like Pretexes, the Ministry of all those that han't the same Manner of Preaching, which they think so well of, must be condemned, as dead and lifeless, useless and unprofitable. And the Hearers must be admonished to betake themselves to better means of Edification, as they would hope for a Conversion to God; and Salvation for their Souls. My Hearers are generally sensible, that I am not proposing to 'em an unexampled and fictitious Case. We need not go far to find numerous Instances of this Kind.

We too often hear of Ministers being magnified above measure for their Success, *as tho' by their own Power and Holiness* they could convert Men to God. And others perhaps equally painful and faithful decry'd as unsuccessful and therefore culpable, for not having as they imagine so many converted to Christ by their Ministry. And if this be really so, upon whom does the
Reflection

Reflection terminate? Unto whom does it belong to *give the Increase*? It is not sufficient Matter of Distress and Grief to a faithful Servant of Christ, to *Labour in vain and spend his Strength for nought*, that there must be Weight added to a burthen, that is of it self too heavy to bear?

But it will be said perhaps that the Case is self evident. We see by Experience, that the most thundring and terrifying Methods of address have Success; and that others have not. If this were true would you argue from thence, that Gods Grace is limited to the Gifts or peculiar Dispositions of a particular Preacher? — But who are the Ministers among us, that neglect to let in Sinners View their Dreadful Misery and Danger; and their last necessity of fleeing from the Wrath to come? Who are they that don't affectionately display the Terrors of the Lord before the Eyes of careless secure Sinners, in the same Methods and Words that they are found in the Scripture; tho' it may be not with the same Elevations of Voice, as some others are capable of? — If we were rocking Sinners to Sleep in their carnal Security, by crying *Peace Peace*, when God says there is no Peace; if we were so cruel to the Souls of our Hearers, as to leave 'em in their
 Stupidity

Stupidity and Sinful Pursuits, without warning them of their Guilt and approaching Misery; or were *prophesying smooth Things and Deceit* to 'em: There would then be just Cause of Complaint. But when we may appeal to the Consciences of our Hearers, that we have with all awful Care and Dilligence endeavour'd to stop their Career for Destruction; and even *travailed in Birth to see Christ formed in them*; how hard is our Case, to be censured as unfaithful for want of Success.

And I would further Observe to these Objectors, that they may mistake in their Conclusion, and pretended Experience or Observation. There may be a great many converted to God that they know nothing of, under that Ministry which they so causelessly slight and reject. I hope they won't all be found unconverted and unsanctified Persons, whose Humility and Modesty restrains them from frequent and open Discourse about their Convictions and other spiritual Experiences.

And I trust we have (these Censures notwithstanding) many *Seals of our Ministry, that will be our Crown and Reioycing in the Day of the Lord Jesus*. Tho' we have nothing to boast of; but have great Cause to be humbled for

D

Unfruit-

Unfruitfulness and Unsuccessfulness in our great Work: (yet blessed be God) we have also Cause to adore the Riches of that free Grace, that has made us Instruments of saving Advantage to so many precious Souls. And this we acknowledge to the Praise and Glory of God, notwithstanding all the Censures of our uncharitable Brethren.

And I would further Observe on the other Hand, that tho' I am far from envying the Ministers of Christ their Success; (the Lord greatly multiply the Number of sincere Converts, who ever he will please to improve as the Instruments of their Conversion) and as far am I from censuring as unsincere any that have hopeful Evidences of Sanctification: Yet it must be remembered, that there is a great Difference between sudden Terrors, and a saving Conversion to God; and that we may not conclude all such to be converted, as are alarm'd by an awakening Sermon.

But after all, if the whole be granted, the Success of any particular Minister can be no Warrant to any Man to leave his Station, and follow him: For this is to go out of God's Way, and consequently out of the Way of his Blessing. Nor can it be a Warrant to censure any faithful Minister of Christ, for want of Success: For these shall be found a sweet Sa-

work

your
and
notw
Trea
ful o
grac
also

5
in o
port
a hi
Dut
enjo
nou
pel.
14.
is it
Thi
min
of t
tar
bat
the
vi.
mun
Thi
con
the
Don

your of Christ, both in them that are saved; and in them that perish. 2 Cor. ii. 15. And notwithstanding all the Abuses and unkind Treatment they may meet with from ungrateful or uncharitable Men. they may claim the gracious Promise, that Christ will be with them always, even to the End of the World.

5 They likewise come under the Imputation in our Text and Doctrine, who neglect to support the Minister God has set over them, from a higher Esteem to some other. There is no Duty of Christianity more fully and plainly enjoined in the Scripture, than giving an honourable Support to the Ministers of the Gospel. Read to this Purpose, 1 Cor. ix. 11, 13, 14. *If we have sown unto you spiritual Things, is it a great Thing, if we shall reap your carnal Things? Do you not know, that they which minister about Holy Things, live of the Things of the Temple; and they which wait at the Altar are Partakers with the Altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained, that they which preach the Gospel, should live of the Gospel. And Gal. vi. 6. Let him that is taught in the Word communicate to him that teacheth, in all good Things.* I have often wondered how Men could have Peace in their own Consciences, in the Neglect of such a plain and manifest Duty. Don't they know, that they live in an open
Violation

Violation of the Law of God, in Ways of highest Injustice to their Minister, and Injury to themselves, both Souls and Bodies? Have they not Reason to expect the Curse of God upon all they possess, when guilty of such a *robbing* him of what he challenges from their Estates for his immediate Service? Is it not equally true under the Gospel Dispensation, as under the legal Oeconomy, that they *rob God*, and *are cursed with a Curse* for it, that withhold from, and refuse to contribute their Proportion to the Support of his Ministers and Ordinances, according to that in *Mal. iii. 8, 9*? Had they rather forfeit God's promised Blessing upon their Substance, and their Interest in his Favour, than part with a small Portion of their worldly Goods, for his Honour and their own Welfare.

But perhaps in answer to all this, they have an Excuse at Hand. They have but a low Esteem for their Minister, his Method of Preaching is not to their Taste. Tho' he be a Man of Piety, Capacity and Diligence; yet his Manner of Address is not agreeable to them, nor so likely (as they imagine) to promote the Interest of their Souls, as the Ministry of another Man, which they therefore choose to attend, and think themselves excused from this Part of their Duty. The true Meaning of which A-

pology

pology is plainly this. If one is pleased to say *he is for Paul, and another he is for Apollos*, God will dispence with his Law, and excuse them from their commanded Duty. But should it not be considered, that Christians are not only under the Obligation of a divine Precept to this Part of their Duty; but that there is also a mutual Covenant between a Minister and his Congregation, whereby they are as well obliged to his Support, as he to the Discharge of his important Trust; that he depends only upon the Congregation to which he is immediately related, for his Subsistence; and is necessarily reduced to Indigency and Want, thro' their parsimonious withholding his Due. No Apology can therefore be made for this Conduct, no Pretence can justify it before God and the World, from being a Contempt of God's Law, a Neglect of a plain manifest Duty and a Fraud of the worst Kind to him that is set over them in the Lord.

I am next to consider the Evidence of our Doctrine, and and to shew how this appears to be an Argument of a carnal Mind. And.

1 This is evident, because if we had not a carnal Mind, we should love and esteem all the faithful Ministers of Christ for his Sake. We should honour their Character, prize and value their Labours; and welcome the Mes-
sage

sage they bring us in the Name of the Lord, as well for his Sake that sent them, as for our own. We should not be *one for Paul*; and *another for Apollos*. We should not propagate Factions and Divisions, disturb the Order, destroy the Peace, and subvert the Edification of the Church of Christ, by factiously preferring one of the Servants of the same Lord to another; if we were under a suitable Influence of a Love to Christ and to his Interest and Kingdom, and were not too carnally minded. Our Lord tells us, *Luk. x. 16. He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me.* The Ministers of the Gospel are called *Ambassadors of Christ, and Stewards of the Mysteries of the Kingdom.* 2 Cor. v. 20. 1 Cor. iv. 1. To which of the Ministers of the Gospel do these Characters belong? Which of them represent the Person and act in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, in the faithful Discharge of their Work? Is it *Paul* only; or only *Apollos*; or *Cephas*; or is it each faithful Minister indifferently? Whence then is this Disrespect to any of the Servants of our common Lord, whom each of them represents in discharging the Service he has appointed them, if we have any just value for him that sends them? Whence can arise these

Abuses

Abuses and Contempts of those whose Character and Services deserve our Honor and Esteem, but from the Actings of a carnal Mind? Moreover;

2. This is also evident, because whatever directly tends to propagate Divisions, flows from Carnality. Tho' I understand that some among us, from Pretences to I know not what Religion, justify their divisive Practices; and speak favourably of Contentions and Confusions, as Signs of the Progress of a Work of Grace: Yet in God's Account, such Divisions are yet to be numbered among the *Works of the Flesh*; and the Authors of them to be esteemed under the Influence of a *fleshy Mind*. *Now the Works of the Flesh are these. — — Hatred, Variance, Emulations, Wrath, Strife, Seditions. &c. Gal. v. 19, 20: This Wisdom descendeth not from above; but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where Envy and Strife is, there is Confusion, and every evil Work. Jam. iii. 15, 16.*

It is true, we may be the innocent Occasions of some Divisions by doing our Duty, while the Lusts of our Opposers are the immediate Cause of them; in which Sense our Lord himself was said, *not to send Peace upon Earth, but a Sword. Mat. x. 34.* But this no Way affects the present Case, which is *setting up*
Altar

Altar against Altar, dividing the Communion and Peace of the Church, promoting Schisms and Debates, meerly because the Contenders are pleased to vilify such Ministers of the Gospel, against whose Faithfulness they can find no justifiable Objection. And if this be doing of their Duty, they must find some new Law to direct their Duty, very opposite to the Gospel of Peace; and a new Rule of Duty, not yet received by the Disciples of the *Prince of Peace*. Nor will it do in this Case, to call the Sincerity of such Ministers into Question, this were to add to their Fault, by their Censoriousness and Uncharitableness. Or in other Words, it would but give clearer Evidences of their Carnality.

3. This is further Evident; because the impleaded Practice directly tends to destroy the Interests of Religion, and to subvert the Kingdom of Christ in the World. The Apostle tells us, *Rom. xiv. 17. That the Kingdom of God is Righteousness, Peace, and Joy in the Holy Ghost.* Whatever therefore tends to destroy these, doth so far tend to destroy the Kingdom of God. This is a clear Case, and needs no Remarks. And I think I need not endeavour to prove, That to subvert the Kingdom of God in the World is a Work of the Flesh. I wish therefore, that Church-dividers

viders would duly consider, that they are serving the Interests of an opposite Kingdom to that of our Lord Jesus Christ, while they are thus sowing the Seeds of Strife and Debate, Contention and Confusion among us. Upon the whole it is no Censoriousness to conclude with Respect to these Destroyers of our Peace and Love, *Ye are yet carnal: For whereas there is among you envyings and Strife and Divisions, are ye not carnal; and walk as Men?*

But it's Time to make some Reflections upon what we have heard. — I presume my Hearers have generally considered whether this Discourse tends; and will therefore bear with me, if I make a particular Application of it to such as have a special Call to apply it to themselves.

Bear with me, my Brethren, if I am constrained to address you in the Language of the great Apostle, 1 Cor. xi. 18. *I bear that there be Divisions among you, and I partly believe it.* The great Infractions of the Peace and Order of this Congregation; and thereby the sinking Interest of Religion therein, is a Lamentation, and shall be for a Lamentation. And what justifiable Cause can you assign for the Schisms that have so long prevailed in this Place? Will any of your pre-

E

tended

tended Reasons of these dividing Practices stand the Tryal of indifferent Judges, or of that Judge who has required you to *obey them that have the Rule over you, to submit your selves to them that Watch for your Souls; and to be at Peace among your selves?* There is verily, *my Brethren*, a Fault among you, that deserves your most serious Consideration and solemn Repentance before God, whatever you may think of it. How consistent soever you may be, *that your Ways are right before God*, by whomsoever you may be encouraged and supported in your dividing Practices, I am greatly mistaken, if they will stand the Tryal of the great Day, when all Disguises will be removed; and you and I must be judged according to what is written in the Book of God. It therefore certainly concerns you, to weigh your behaviour impartially in the Ballances of the Sanctuary; and to consider it, as it must be considered at the Bar of Christ. This being an Affair of everlasting Consequence, I would most earnestly invite and entreat you in the Name and Fear of God, seriously to hearken to, and lay to Heart these following Considerations.

- **NOY.** Are you equally certain, That you have a justifiable Plea for your so frequently turning your Back upon the Ordinances of Christ here dispenced;

dispenced; and for your *Gadding about to change your Way*; as you are, that Christ requires of you *not to forsake the Assembling your selves together*; to honour and esteem him that is set over you in the Lord, to walk charitably; and to study the Things that make for Peace, and those Things whereby you may edify one another? Or if you falsely imagine you have such Certainty, what will be the Consequence, if the Lord Jesus Christ in the great Day shall disown your Conduct, silence all your Pleas and Excuses; and say to your Minister, as in *Luk. x. 16. He that hath despised you hath despised me; and that hath despised me, hath despised him that sent me?*

Is it a light Matter for you to do what you can, to prevent the Success of the Ordinances of the Gospel in this Place? Don't these Divisions tend to weaken the Hands of your Minister; and to bring others into a low Esteem of, and Disregard for his Ministrations; and thereby into infinite Danger of being barren and unfruitful under them? And is this a small Thing in your Esteem? Consider how many precious Souls there are, whose eternal Welfare very much depends upon the Success of the Ministry here; and would you be the Instruments of their eternal Ruin? Can you be content that any of these should curse you to
all

all Eternity, as the sad Occasions of their Disregard to the *Things of their Peace*; so often inculcated upon them from this Desk? O! take heed that you lay not a stumbling Block in the Way of the everlasting Happiness, of the immortal Souls of your Neighbours.

3. Are the Offences that are raised among you a small Matter in your Eyes? As you are causelessly taking Offence with your Minister, and other Christian Brethren, with whom you should *take sweet Council together*; and walk *to the House of God in Company*; so are they likewise justly and necessarily taking Offence with you. And thus that Union and Communion which becomes Saints is interrupted, your Spirits too much sowed, and your Affections too much alienated from one another. God is dishonoured, Piety and Charity wounded in the House of their professed Friends. This is visibly your Case, the sad Consequences whereof are open to the World. Tho' you may make light of these Offences, our Lord Jesus Christ does not so. The Estimate he makes of them, you may learn from his own Mouth, in *Mat. xiii. 6, 7. But whoso shall offend one of these little Ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a Millstone were hanged about his Neck; and that he were drowned in the depth of the Sea. Wo unto the World because of Offences:*

fences : for it must needs be, That Offences come : But wo to that Man by whom the Offence cometh.

4 Don't you think that the Lord Jesus will in the Day of his appearing and Kingdom, stand by that Word of his, whereby he has so strictly forbidden Contentions, Divisions, and Confusions among his Disciples? You seem to have little or no regard to the Sinfulness of your divisive Courses; but even seem to justify them as lawful and laudable; and by your Practices to commend them as your Duty and Interest. *But what saith the Scriptures?* Do not you your selves know how these Things are every where forbidden and condemned in the Oracles of God? Some View of this has now been laid before you in this present Discourse. And what can you say to it? Can you yet be upright in your own Eyes? Will you yet justify your Divisions, when God himself so severely condemns them? But whose Word must stand in the great Account, his or yours? How will these Things appear, when you must answer for them before your Judge? *What will you do when God riseth up, when he visits what will you answer?*

5. Will not your glorious Judge at his coming justify that Word of his, whereby he has required you to honourably support and maintain

tain your Minister? Your Duty in this Respect is plainly legible. You cannot by any Umbrage evade the Force of the clear and plain Manifestations of God's Will in this Respect. But yet you live in open Violations, and a seeming Defiance of those Divine Injunctions, and seem to have Peace in so doing. Indeed, *Sirs*, it is Time to consider, that how secure soever you may now be in this Matter, there will be an after Reckoning. And what Plea will you then have to make? How will you answer the Demands of your Judge, when he calls you to Account for this Part of your Duty.

And now I would further improve this Discourse, by a particular Address to my Brethren in the Ministry. If it be an Argument of Carnality in our People, to factiously set up and prefer one Minister to another, it certainly concerns us to take Care, that we are not the Instruments and Occasions of these Divisions. It would be sad indeed for any of our Order, to abet and encourage these Factions and Confusions. Nothing could be more contrary to the great Ends of our Ministry, Nothing could more directly tend to subvert the Interest of Christ's Kingdom among us, which we are bound by such sacred and awful Obligations to endeavour to promote and advance ;
than

than for us to excite and actuate, or even to countenance these unchristian Animosities and Emulations. Are we Servants of the Prince of Peace, let us approve ourselves such, by using our utmost Effays to promote vital Piety among our Hearers; and to procure *Peace on Earth, and good Will among Men*. Let us with earnest Diligence, fervent Prayerfulness; and assiduous Application to our Great Work, endeavour if possible to unite our People to our Ministry, and to one another. Tho' we may meet with unworthy and ungrateful Treatment from some of our Hearers, whose eternal Welfare we have so earnestly consulted and pursued, tho' our Prayers and Labour of Love for their Souls be so evilly requited with Reproach and Censure; we are not to sit still in a Melancholly Dejection under our hard Lot; but consider these Abuses and Calumnies, as a spur to greater Serionfness, Activity, and Diligence, in our sacred Calling.

If we are wrongfully censured, it should be improved as a Caution and Warning; if justly, as a loud Call to Humiliation and Reformation. If upon an impartial Examination we can justify our own Sincerity: Yet we cannot but condemn our many Imperfections, which the censorious Treatment we meet with, should awaken us to repent of, and reform.

This

This is the best Method to quiet the Clamours of our Accusers ; or at least to wipe off their Reproaches. — In a Word, let us in all Things approve our selves as the Ministers of God, in much Patience, tho' in Afflictions, Necessities and Distresses, by Pureness by Knowledge, by Long suffering, by Kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by Love unfeigned, by Honour and Dishonour, by evil Report and good Report. — Let us strive with all earnest Application to pluck Sinners out of the Snares of Death ; and to see Christ formed in the People of our Charge. If God denies us Success, let that also quicken our Diligence and Prayerfulness ; if he grant us Success, we shall not repent our greatest Care and Pains : but find Cause to praise him for ever.

Finally, let me earnestly exhort and entreat you all, to endeavour to live in the Love of God, and in Love with one another, to let the Peace of God rule in your Hearts, to be perfect, to be of good Comfort, to be of one Mind, to live in Peace, that the God of Love and Peace may be with you. And I would particularly exhort those of this Congregation that have so long been fomenting Divisions and Factions here, to seriously lay to Heart, the Iniquity of their dividing Courses ; and not to persevere in Practices so displeasing to
God,

God, and Destructive to themselves. I would implore them in the Name and Fear of God, to consider these Things; and not to drive the Ordinances of God from them; and provoke him to bring upon them a *Famine, not of Bread; nor a Thirst for Water: But of bearing the Word of the Lord.* — I conclude with that pathetick Expostulation of the Apostle *Phil. ii.* begining. *If there be therefore any Consolation in Christ, if any Comfort of Love, if any Fellowship of the Spirit, if any Bowels of Mercy, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like minded, having the same Hope, of one Accord, of one Mind. Let nothing be done through Strife or vain Glory: but in lowliness of Mind, let each esteem others better than themselves.*

F I N I S.



6 AP 53

